



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
*1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

March 14, 2003

Snohomish County Board of Health Members
Snohomish County Administrative Offices
3020 Rucker Ave
Suite 206
Everett, WA 98201-3900

Dear Chairman:

Thank you and the other members of your board of health for allowing Don Sloma and me to come before you this week to learn more about your priority areas of concern.

We heard “loud and clear” your board’s concern about state government efforts to support your efforts on West Nile Virus. We shared those concerns with the rest of the state Board and with state health officer Dr. Maxine Hayes, M.D. at our Wednesday meeting. The state Department of Health Web page on West Nile is www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/zoo/wnv/wnv.html the statewide phone number for up to date information on the disease, its movements in our state and on steps to take to prevent it will be functioning on April 1. It is 1-866-364-9518 (**WA state only**). A separate Spanish language phone line is expected to be up shortly after April 1. The state Department of Health plans to distribute some 250,000 brochures in the coming weeks to local health jurisdictions, parks and elsewhere that will contain these phone numbers, web links and other information about West Nile Virus. Press packets and other media information will also be available. Unfortunately, we have been told that the current state Department of Health budget does include funds to produce a full-blown media campaign including public service announcements and more. But we are willing to work with you, the state department and others in public health to encourage the responsible media and other private sector entities to produce and air the available material. After hearing of your concerns, the state Board opted to request a brief update on the State Department of Health’s West Nile Virus efforts at its April 9, 2003 meeting at the Phoenix Inn in Olympia at approximately 9:30 AM. We anticipate news about permitting issues, and greater clarity on questions of legal authority by that time.

In addition to the concerns you had about West Nile Virus, I want you to know we also heard your request for improvement in the adequacy and stability of public health funding in our state. As we said during the meeting, this will be the focus of our April 9 meeting. We hope you and some of your members can join us to share your view of Governor Locke’s commitment to public health funding and to examine legislative proposals on the subject. Please be assured, the state Board is committed to sharing the word with the public and within state government about the risks we face if we fail to provide an adequate and stable infrastructure for public health.

Finally, we heard your interest in seeing the state Board help to educate state officials and our citizens about the core wisdom of public health --- proven prevention is best. There are proven ways to prevent social as well as medical causes of illness and death. Child abuse, delinquency, violence and many other social ills can be prevented through proven strategies.

The meeting was very helpful to our ongoing efforts to learn more about community perspectives on public health issues. As I mentioned during our discussion, we intend to use the information we receive from you and other Boards of Health in our 2004 State Health Report. By law, the state Board must produce this report biennial, together with recommendations for state health priorities for the ensuing biennium. You may see the 2002 State Health Report at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/sboh/Pubs/2002SHR.pdf>

If you would like to provide additional information, other community perspectives or other suggestions for statewide health priorities, please feel free to call or write. We will be accepting additional input from local boards of health for the state health report until June 30, 2003. We are open to hearing from you about emerging issues at any time.

If you have any further questions or requests, please call the Board office at (360) 236-4110 and one of our staff would be happy to assist you in anyway possible.

Again, thank you for allowing us some time with you in your busy schedules.

Sincerely, .

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Lake", with a stylized, flowing script.

Linda Lake,
Chair, Washington State Board of Health